

Dear Tom and Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

I am submitting this testimony for your consideration. Thank you.

In regards to collections in Vermont libraries, for all residents and especially for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, youths and children, immigrant and migrant communities, and people living in poverty, unequivocally the best way to improve access to library services and collections is to develop and implement a state-wide library card and catalog. This is something that librarians have been talking about and requesting for many years.

Imagine a patron who has no personal transportation being able to, without paying a fee, use the nearest public library. Imagine a new American being able to browse and use any library that might have collections in their language without having to wait for inter-library loans. Imagine the increased access for those living in poverty who cannot afford to pay non-resident fees at a library that is able to offer collections and services that are not available at their tiny hometown library.

People who have lived elsewhere before coming to Vermont are usually astounded that we do not offer a state-wide or even county-wide library card. This is standard practice in most other states, and for good reason. To implement this would require significant resources from the state. Increased state funding for our public libraries is critical.

Yes, it's a large and complex undertaking, but the longest journey starts with one step.

Almy Landauer